

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

The DWP continues to press ahead in phasing out Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for adults of working age. DLA claimants are being given the option of claiming Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead. Here is some basic guidance and pointers to help steer you through the process.

The DWP will write to you when the time comes to transfer from DLA to PIP.

[Ref PIP 0201 if indefinite DLA award; PIP 0202 if coming to end of fixed term.]

The letter asks you to make a phone call to initiate a PIP assessment. If you are unable to deal with this by phone, it is possible to request a paper form to be sent out.

You are asked to contact the DWP to start a PIP claim within 4 weeks of the date on the letter, otherwise your DLA will be stopped. If you initiate a PIP claim within a further 4 weeks, your DLA will restart. After that you can still make a PIP claim, but you will not be paid DLA in the meantime.

The person at the other end of the phone will be completing a 'PIP1' form, which asks for basic information. (details follow below).

Making the phone call

The phone number - 0800 917 2222 - is free to call from BT landlines and most mobiles. Some phone providers will charge.

If you are concerned about the cost you can ask the DWP to call you back. Of course, this will mean giving the DWP your phone number. In fact, you will be asked for a daytime contact number when you make this call. So, if you prefer not to give out your phone number to the DWP, be prepared to advise that you don't manage to take calls reliably. As the DWP will not leave a message, you prefer that they write to you about your claim.

Another person can make this call on your behalf. However, unless this person is your official appointee, you will need to participate if only to confirm to the DWP that this person has your permission to make the call on your behalf and to pass a 'quick identity check'.

The letter you receive advises that the call "*will only take a short time*". In fact, it is likely to take around 15 minutes. Which may be a short time to the DWP, but can be a long time indeed for a very sick person.

At the end of the initial telephone call, the claimant will be asked to agree a declaration that the agent will read out. Your agreement confirms that the information you have given is true and accurate.

What if I can't use the phone?

Although the letter the DWP send about this does not mention this, it is possible to request a paper copy of the PIP1 form to complete. The address to write to is:

Personal Independence Payment New Claims
Post Handling Site B
Wolverhampton
WV99 1AH

The DWP state: *Paper claim forms will be by exception for those claimants that are unable to make a claim by phone.* This refers to the initial, basic entitlement conditions claim form [PIP1]. The detailed form about how your illness affects your mobility and daily living [PIP2] *must* be completed on paper.

The claimant is given 1 month to return the paper claim form from the date the request was received.

What will I be asked about in the initial phone call / PIP claim form?

The purposes of this are:

- 1. to establish whether or not you meet basic qualifying criteria; and**
- 2. to identify any communication needs and/or needs for additional support through the PIP claim process**
- 3. to identify claims under the special rules for terminally ill people**

1. The Basic Qualifying Criteria are:

(i) that you are of an age to claim PIP;

(ii) that your 'habitual' residence is in the UK, Channel Islands, Republic of Ireland or Isle of Man; and

(iii) that you have been present in Great Britain for at least two of the last three years.

2. Communication Needs and Additional Support

You should be asked about any cognitive or memory problems you have. The DWP may give dementia and brain injury as examples. The reason for this is that people with memory problems, as well as other types of disorder affecting mental faculties (e.g. behavioural disorders, learning difficulties) should not be penalised for failing to complete and return a PIP form, or failing to return it on time. And they are considered to possibly need 'additional support or help' through the PIP claim process.

The not so good news: the DWP consider themselves to be the source of 'additional support or help'.

DWP say: The claimant will not have to answer detailed questions about their health condition or disability, just some questions to establish if they have a mental, cognitive or learning impairment. This will help us establish if the claimant may need additional support through the claim process.

During the telephone call, if the agent identifies that the claimant needs additional support with completing the claim, they can arrange for a DWP visiting officer to assist the claimant.

Although cognitive impairment is a core feature of M.E., this tends to be under-recognised. We would certainly advise that you bring this to the DWP's attention if you would have difficulty completing a PIP form on time, or with any other aspect of the PIP claim process, in consequence of cognitive impairment. The advocacy service can help by providing a letter and information about this.

Other Questions asked at PIP1 stage

The letter sent to advise you that PIP is starting will indicate some of the other questions that you are likely to be asked.

If you would like to see exactly what a PIP1 form covers, you can download a sample copy from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-pip-clerical-claim-form

If you are not on-line, please contact the office or advocacy service about this.

Unfortunately, you can't simply obtain a blank copy of the form and have it filled out ready to return. All PIP forms must be 'personalised' - PIP1 with your name and postcode. The 'personalised' form must be returned.

You do not have to answer all of the questions asked. You can advise: "don't know" or "can't think of the answer just now, if appropriate. For example, you will be asked to provide information about any health and social care professionals you would wish the DWP to contact, including contact details. You will have the opportunity to provide these details when you receive a PIP2 form (about how your illness affects you), so if you're in any doubt about how best respond to this do not feel obliged to answer these questions at this stage.

Communicating by e-mail about your PIP assessment

Both assessing agencies have here are e-mail addresses available for communication:

CAPITA contactus@capita-pip.co.uk and

ATOS PIP-customerservice@atos.net

However: ***"due to security limitations we are unable to accept emails sent with an attachment"***.

And don't expect any 'joined up' thinking if you have cause to send more than one e-mail.

Re dealing with e-mails (including internal): *"The case manager looks at the e-mails and passes the tasks out to staff around the country."* (This feedback re Capita)

Helen Brownie
25% ME Group advocacy service
July 2015
(reviewed Feb 2016)